

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00  
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 MC-02  
/067 W

-----050733Z 025465 /20

R 041622Z MAR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS  
TO SECDEF WASHDC  
SEC AF WASHDC  
SECSTATE WASHDC 9224

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 2109

FOR SECRETARY OF AIR FORCE REED

E.O.11652: GDS  
TAGS: MASS, MARR, MPOL, BE, DA, NL, NO  
SUBJECT: F-16 AND BELGIAN POLITICS

REF: BRUSSELS 2011

1. IN CONSIDERING HOW TO RESPOND TO VANDEN BOEYNANTS' LETTER OF MARCH 2, YOU SHOULD NOTE THAT THE TINDEMANS' GOVERNMENT IS QUITE SHAKY AND COULD BE BROUGHT DOWN AT ANY TIME. WE ARE NOT PREDICTING ITS IMMEDIATE DEMISE. THERE IS A REASONABLE CHANCE THAT TINDEMANS WILL HANG ON FOR A WHILE LONGER. BUT WE WOULD NOT BET MUCH ON IT. THERE IS A REAL POSSIBILITY THAT HE WILL FEEL COMPELLED TO RESIGN IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS AND CALL FOR NEW ELECTIONS, QUITE POSSIBLY BEFORE VANDEN BOEYNANTS DECIDES HE HAS RECEIVED ENOUGH SATISFACTION TO WARRANT HIS SIGNING THE LOA.

2. IF THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD TUMBLE BEFORE VANDEN OGEYNANTS SIGNS, THE BELGIANS ACCEPTANCE OF THE LOA PROBABLY WOULD BE DELAYED AND COMPLICATED.

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3. IN A CARE-TAKER CABINET, VANDEN BOEYNANTS WOULD BE EVEN MORE CAUTIOUS THAN NOW. NORMALLY CARE-TAKER GOVERNMENTS ARE EXPECTED MERELY TO HANDLE THE DAY-TO-DAY BUSINESS AND NOT MAKE IMPORTANT COMMITMENTS.

4. ONCE A GOVERNMENT IS DISSOLVED IT NORMALLY TAKES TWO TO FOUR MONTHS BEFORE ELECTIONS ARE HELD AND ANOTHER GOVERNMENT IS INSTALLED.

IT COULD BE LONGER. TINDEMANS NEEDED NEARLY THREE MONTHS AFTER THE 1974 ELECTIONS TO FORM HIS GOVERNMENT. THE NEW DEFENSE MINISTER WOULD WANT ADDITIONAL TIME TO REVIEW THE F-16 PROGRAM AND DECIDE ON HIS POLICY. IT COULD BE MID-SUMMER BEFORE A NEW DEFENSE MINISTER WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO ACCEPT THE LOA OR REOPEN NEGOTIATIONS.

5. IF POLITICAL PARTIES CURRENTLY IN OPPOSITION SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT, WHICH IS A GENUINE POSSIBILITY, THEY MIGHT WELL WISH TO REEXAMINE THE F-16 FILE. SUCH A RE-EXAMINATION PROBABLY WOULD NOT JEOPARDIZE BELGIUM'S COMMITMENT TO THE PROGRAM, BUT WOULD TAKE MORE TIME. ADDITIONAL MONTHS COULD BE WASTED.

6. IN VIEW OF THESE POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS, I RECOMMEND THAT EVERY EFFORT BE MADE TO ANSWER VANDEN BOEYNANTS' LETTER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

7. WE HAVE NO GOOD FIX ON HOW MUCH VANDEN BOEYNANTS WILL INSIST ON BEFORE HE WILL SIGN. HIS PROBLEM IS REAL AND HE DOES NEED HELP IN SOLVING IT. HIS BUDGET IS TIGHT AND THE PROSPECTS FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDS ARE POOR. HE COULD DIVERT FUNDS FROM THE ARMORED INFANTRY FIGHTING VEHICLE PROGRAM. BUT THE PRESENT VEHICLES ARE DILAPIDATED AND COSTLY TO RUN. VANDEN BOEYNANTS WOULD NOT WANT TO DELAY THIS PROGRAM FOR VERY LONG. BUT SURELY VANDEN BOEYNANTS DOES NOT EXPECT TO GET EVERYTHING HE IS DEMANDING. HE IS A TOUGH BUT REALISTIC NEGOTIATOR. HE KNOWS THAT HE WILL HAVE TO COMPROMISE. MY GUESS IS THAT HE WILL SIGN IF THE U.S. MAKES A SUBSTANTIAL EFFORT AND SATISFIES AT LEAST HALF OF HIS REQUESTS. RENNER  
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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009